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THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

JUN 29 1992

Rm 7747

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Honorable Robert E. Wise, Jr.
Chairman, Government Information, Justice, and
Agriculture Subcommittee
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives
B-349-C Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515-6147

Dear Chairman Wise:

Thank you for your June 11th letter addressing the petition for rulemaking filed by American Radio Relay League (ARRL) to permit amateur packet operations in the 216-220 MHz band (RM-7747). The ARRL proposes that high-speed, inter-city packet operations be permitted on a secondary, non-interference basis to link local, regional, and national digital networks where such links are technically infeasible in the amateur 222-225 MHz band.

The Commission recognizes the value of the amateur services to the government and citizens of the United States. Amateurs have a proven record of providing assistance in all types of emergencies, including national and international disasters, and constitute a valuable corps of talented people with a long history of advancing the radio art.

We recognize the usefulness of a high-speed, inter-city packet network capable of forming a nation-wide backbone to connect local packet nodes. Accordingly, the Commission accepted this petition for comment, and public comments have been received from 12 parties. Currently the petition and comments thereon are being reviewed by the staff and I expect a Commission decision in this matter shortly.

Please be assured that the needs of the amateur community are important to the Commission, and are being taken carefully into consideration in this proceeding. Your letter also will be considered before a final determination is made, and for that purpose I am making your letter part of the record in RM-7747.

Sincerely,

Alfred C. Sikes
Chairman

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Special Congressional

T. DeLoach 6/15

DUE: 6-19-92

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9201779	06/12/1992	06/11/1992	06/25/1992	06/23/1992

TITLE	MEMBERS NAME	REPLY FOR SIG OF
Congressman	Bob Wise	ACS

CONSTITUENT'S NAME	SUBJECT
personal view	inq/comments re: a specific rulemaking

REF TO	REF TO	REF TO	REF TO
PRE/KMMD 6-12-92	rules 6/12/92	OET 6-15-92	FAB
DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
06/12/1992	6/12/92		

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REMARKS:

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*PRB
Rulemaking
P.W.
ACS
1779*

June 11, 1992

The Honorable Alfred C. Sikes
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Sikes:

I am writing in support of a petition for rulemaking (RM-7747) filed by the American Radio Relay League Incorporated (ARRL) asking that the Federal Communications Commission provide a secondary, non-interference allocation to the amateur radio service at 216-220 MHz.

On May 11, 1989, my Subcommittee held a hearing on the FCC's reallocation of the 220-222 MHz band away from amateur radio service. We heard testimony from the Department of Defense and the National Communications System that the contribution of amateur or "ham" radio operators is essential to national security emergency preparedness. Ham operators provide, on a volunteer basis, crucial telecommunications assistance to the Federal Government during security emergencies resulting from terrorist acts, sabotage and natural disasters and give lifesaving assistance in times of local, regional and national emergency.

Until last year, one of the most promising tools that amateurs had available to provide this assistance was a high-speed, inter-city packet network under development in the 220-222 MHz band. This network linked local, regional and national digital communications and represented a new and efficient use of the spectrum. With the Commission's reallocation of the 220-222 MHz band, however, the hams have had to curtail much of the development and implementation of the packet network, other than on a purely local basis.

The Honorable Alfred C. Sikes, page two
June 11, 1992

What amateurs have lost cannot be replicated elsewhere in the remaining amateur spectrum allocations. The 144-148 MHz band is full, as is the 222-225 MHz band. According to DOD and NCS, propagation and government sharing limitations prevent the 420-450 MHz and higher frequency bands from supporting the path lengths of 60-100 miles required for high-speed, inter-city packet communications. Consequently, the loss to amateurs of the 220-222 MHz band represents a severe blow to our country's coordinated NSEP effort.

This blow can and should be softened. Subsequent to our hearing, I suggested in a letter to Chairman Patrick several options that the FCC could pursue to satisfy the needs of all parties interested in the reallocation docket. One of those options -- to give the amateur service a secondary allocation at 216-220 MHz -- remains valid even in light of the reallocation. When the FCC denied ARRL's petition for reconsideration in the original reallocation docket, it invited ARRL to submit a petition for a reallocation of the 216-220 MHz band on a non-interference basis. This is exactly what ARRL has done.

There are several important factors that militate in favor of granting this petition and, as far as I can determine, no convincing reasons for not doing so. ARRL has proposed that the 216-220 MHz allocation be on a secondary basis to the existing services, which include some fixed stations, Automated Maritime Telecommunications Service (AMTS) stations, and the new Interactive Video Data Service. ARRL has provided the Commission with engineering studies showing that, with proper coordination by ARRL, none of the existing services would suffer interference if the amateur service received a secondary allocation. I understand that no party has provided technical evidence to the contrary and that the sole AMTS commenter supported the petition.

It has been more than nine months since the reallocation of the 220-222 MHz band became effective and a year since ARRL filed its petition with the Commission. It is time for the Commission to take action. That action should favor national security, emergency preparedness and volunteer citizen involvement. I urge the